

# *The Story of the “Grads”*

*Being a Short History  
of the*

*Edmonton Commercial Graduates’  
Basketball Club*



Eleanor - Connie - Mr. Page - Abbie - Daisy  
Nellie - Mary - Winnie - Dorothy

*Including a brief account of their recent  
European tour*

15587 R

RB 11184

Ex LIBRIS  
UNIVERSITATIS  
ALBERTAENSIS



Spec. Coll.  
GV  
S85, S  
E3  
E24

2317987

# *Commercial Graduates'* *Basketball Club*

EDMONTON, CANADA

## OFFICERS:

Honorary President	John Imrie, Man. Director, Edmonton Journal.
President	.... Daisy Johnson
Chaperone	Mrs. J. P. Page
Captain	Connie Smith
Club Physician	Dr. F. W. Crang
Business Manager and Coach	J. Percy Page
Executive	Daisy Johnson, Connie Smith, J. P. Page

## PATRONS:

His Honor, Lieut.-Governor R. G. Brett; Hon. Herbert Greenfield, Premier of Alberta; His Worship, the Mayor of Edmonton; Presidents of the Rotary, Kiwanis and Gyro Clubs; C. E. Race, President Dominion Basketball Association.

Official Colors	Black and Gold
Official Flower	Chrysanthemum
Official Mascot	"Spark Plug"

## Members of World's Championship Team, 1924

Winnie Martin (Captain), Connie Smith, Dorothy Johnson, Mary Dunn, Abbie Scott, Daisy Johnson, Eleanor Mountifield, Nellie Perry and Helen McIntosh. Coach, J. P. Page

## COMMERCIAL YELL

Pickles, ketchup, chow, chow, chow,  
Chew 'em up, eat 'em up, bow, wow, wow;  
Hannibal, cannibal, sis, boom, bah,  
Commercial Graduates, rah, rah, rah!

## *On To Europe*

Two years ago a train pulled out from Edmonton and steamed away—  
There scarcely was a parting shout, although the Grads went east that day.  
For those who saw them on their quest were none too gay and all too few.  
'The girls, at least, will do their best,' proclaimed the leader of the crew  
For several days no news was heard; the Grads it seemed had passed from sight—  
Until there came the gladsome word, they'd done their best and done it right.  
And so they ambled back once more, each bringing home some stinging welts,  
As well as what they'd travelled for—the Shamrock scalps hung at their belts.

'Twas thenabout the burghers came to life—although a trifle bored.—  
Dominion titles, just the same, are things that cannot be ignored—  
They went to see the home team play because it was a duty clear;  
But, when they saw the stiff affray, they stopped to call for more and cheer.

So by the time invaders crossed the line down south to show their wares,  
A whole town's heart was tempest-tossed, men dropped their every-day affairs.  
"Of course the Yanks should win," they said, "but just the same, they'll be hard pressed—"  
Unmoved, the Grads just plugged ahead, and once again they did their best.

Two years ago, unsung, unknown, eight plucky girls began the grind  
To victory; and now alone they stand, with others far behind.  
And those whose scoffing tongues wagged loose have had their day in which to laugh—  
The continent cannot produce another team who'll stand the gaff.

Tomorrow morning once again, with glittering banner all unfurled,  
The Grads will step aboard the train—they'll go as champions of the world.  
Full sixty thousand hearts will go to cheer them in their greatest quest,  
And sixty thousand fans will know the girls, once more, will do their best.

—F. B. W.

# *History of the “Grads”*

---

## **EARLY DAYS**

The Commercial Grads, so called because each member of the team is a graduate of the McDougall-Commercial high school, had their beginning away back in 1914, when two commercial classes, about 60 students in all, were installed in the McDougall school, just west of the Armouries in the Hudson's Bay Reserve. During the fall of that year, a high school basketball league was formed for the first time in Edmonton, and the commercial girls were invited to enter a team. At that time, there was no gymnasium in the school, and with only a rough, out-door court at their disposal, the girls were not counted upon to furnish much opposition to the other high schools. However, in spite of the handicap above mentioned, the commercial team proved to be the surprise of the season by winning every game in its schedule, and becoming the first holders of the Richardson Trophy, emblematic of the high school championship.

Encouraged by their success in the high school league, the team decided to enter the newly-formed intercollegiate league, including not only the high schools, but the University and Alberta College. Once again the team was successful, winning the intercollegiate title in a spirited play-off with Strathcona high school. Having thus won the championship of the city schools, a challenge was sent to Camrose Normal School to play off for the provincial championship, the latter team having easily defeated Calgary in a two-game series. The game between Commercial High and Camrose was played in the latter town, and resulted in a win for the commercial girls by a score of 13-7. In consequence of this victory, the first provincial championship was brought to Commercial High.

## **FORMATION OF THE C. G. C.**

At the end of the school year, the girls who comprised the school team were anxious to continue playing the game, and with this end in view, a meeting was called with the object of forming a Commercial Graduates' Club. The meeting was carried through successfully, and a club formally organized, the following constituting the original team which the club agreed to promote: Nellie Batson and Ella Osborne, forwards; Ethel Anderson and Mary Bremner, centres; Winnie Martin (Captain) and Geraldine Reid, guards. It is worthy of note that the original captain of the team remained constantly at the helm from 1915 to 1924, except for one year when she went east to finish her

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"



CONNIE SMITH  
Present Captain of the Grads

### *Kaptain Konnie*

Captain Connie is as fleet  
As the god with winged feet.  
Quick to start, she leaves her check  
Far behind, a nervous wreck.  
Certainly, we're all too glad  
To admit she isn't bad.

If you want a proper tip  
On the art of marksmanship,  
Come and watch the long shots soar  
Through the hoop from centre-floor.  
We'd be modest if we could,  
But we must admit she's good.

Captain Connie, we must state,  
Does not lack for solid weight.  
There have been a few who've tried  
Roughly pushing her aside—  
They aver they'd sooner fall  
Up against a nice stone wall.

Captain Connie, when she's pressed,  
Just continues with her best—  
Going may be mighty tough  
But her "best" is quite enough—  
Not in word alone, by hang!  
Is she captain of "the gang."

F. B. W.

university course, a fitting testimonial to her wonderful ability both as a player and as a director of the team.

### CLIMBING UPWARD

It must be admitted that the standard of basketball at this time was not very high, due to the fact that the game was more or less in its infancy in this part of the country; nevertheless, the winning of a provincial championship acted as an incentive for higher things, and the "Grads", as they were now called, continued to play together in the hope of retaining their recently-won honors, and perhaps going a step higher. In order to encourage the game, the Harold A. Wilson Company,

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---

of Toronto, donated a shield for provincial competition on a challenge basis. This was competed for annually, the two teams figuring mostly in the competition being Varsity and the Grads. Although the latter were debarred from entering any of the school leagues, on account of being ex-students, and thus being handicapped by lack of games with other teams, the girls plugged along year after year and, with the single exception of the season 1910-20, they succeeded in winning the provincial title and retaining the Wilson shield.

The latter competition was not without its disadvantages, and mainly through the efforts of Mr. C. E. Race, of the University, a provincial basketball association was organized to control the sport and put it on a proper working basis. Through the generosity of Miss Edna Bakewell, a former Washington and Alberta University star, a cup was donated for provincial competition. This was won three times in as many years by the Grads, and became their permanent property last year when they defeated Varsity in two well-played games.

### AFTER DOMINION HONORS

The monotonous grind, year after year, with little opportunity for competition, had at least one advantage in that it bound the girls closely together and developed a Grad spirit which, perhaps more than any other factor, has accounted for their remarkable success. Naturally, the personnel of the team was constantly changing, and it has always been a matter of regret that several girls who were wonderful players in years gone by were denied the fruits of their labors. A history of this kind would be incomplete without the mention of such stellar players as Ella Osborne, Nellie Batson, Elena Todd and Geraldine Reid—every one of whom compared favorably with the best players of today.

Finally, in the spring of 1922, it was felt that a "sextette" had been gathered together which would give any team in the country a real argument, and inasmuch as the London "Shamrocks" were claiming the Canadian championship—without even considering the possibility of western teams disputing the claim—it was decided to forward a challenge to the easterners and see what would happen. It didn't take long for something to happen, and in a few days arrangements were under way to stage the first Dominion basketball championship, in London.

### FINANCES

It should be recorded at this point that during the several years the Grads had been playing, they had always operated at a loss. No one took much interest in the game; there was no central gymnasium capable of accommodating more than 200 people; consequently, it was an exceptional game that produced a "gate" of as much as \$25.00. In the

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---



THE INTERNATIONAL TROPHY

When the Grads defeated Cleveland in the first series of international games, no trophy was available for competition. However, through the courtesy of the Underwood Typewriter Company, and their energetic local manager—J. Garnet Pearson—the above magnificent trophy was secured and awarded to the Grads. It is open for competition upon a challenge basis between teams of girls in Canada and the United States. It has been competed for on several occasions since it was first donated, but has remained continuously in possession of the Grads up to the time of writing.

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---

meantime, there was rent to pay for the use of the school gymnasium, uniforms and equipment to buy, and the thousand-and-one other expenses which are always a part of team sport. The year previous, the team had challenged Saskatoon University for the western Canadian championship, the trip to the Saskatchewan city, apart from a guarantee which did not cover half the expenses, being financed by the team itself. Two games were played in Saskatoon on the same day, the Grads winning from the "Y" by a score of 51-8, and from the University, 45-12. The result of these games gave the Grads a clear title to the western title—but nothing else, except a deficit of considerable proportions.

These, then, were the circumstances under which the Grads sent their challenge to London—a far from alluring prospect. London offered a guarantee of \$600, leaving a similar amount to be raised—a formidable task for two reasons: first, there was but little interest in the game, and, secondly, the rugby team had been unfortunate enough to suffer a bad beating the previous fall, and the citizens naturally did not take at all kindly to another venture when the prospects of success were no greater. Under the circumstances, the Grads decided to make no appeal to the public, apart from issuing a general statement to the effect that they proposed to make the trip and that any contributions would be welcomed. Once again the old Grad spirit manifested itself, and donations from ex-students soon made their appearance. Friends here and there also came to the team's assistance, but two days before the trip it was found that something like \$300 was still lacking. Rather than call the trip off, the team decided to put up the money themselves. This was done, and the Grads left for London on Thursday, May 11, 1922. Only six players made the trip, lack of funds preventing the coach from taking along a single sub. The personnel of the team was as follows: Daisy Johnson and Nellie Perry, forwards; Eleanor Mountfield and Dorothy Johnson, centres; Winnie Martin (Captain) and Connie Smith, guards.

### THEIR FIRST DOMINION TITLE

Owing to the fact that the western teams were playing according to women's rules, and eastern teams according to men's, it was decided to play two games, one under each set of rules, the total points scored by each team to determine the winner. Playing under western rules, the Grads won the first game by a score of 41-8, displaying a system of combination which the London papers admitted had never been equalled in any previous game in that city. The second game, played under men's rules, went to London by a score of 21-8. The Grads had never played a game under the latter rules, and were totally at sea. Nevertheless, they gave a demonstration of gameness before a thoroughly partisan crowd that brought forth bouquets from both London papers, playing with a vigor and determination that prevented the Shamrocks from coming closer than 20 points from the championship.

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---



**WINNIE MARTIN**  
Captain 1915-22, and 1924

Only one who has played the game can appreciate the strain of playing through a championship series without a sub, especially after a tiresome trip, and playing through a schedule of four games in as many nights. Exhibition games at St. Thomas and Toronto were also included in the Grads' list of wins, and it is worthy of note that the final game at London marked the Grads' last defeat. Since that time they have run through a list of 38 consecutive wins, defeating teams in Canada, United States and Europe.

### THE HOMECOMING

Strange as it may seem, the triumph of the Grads in 1922 did not create more than a ripple of excitement locally. True, when the train pulled in to Edmonton the team was met by Mike and his band, and a crowd of happy students and Grads of Commercial High; the team was also banqueted by the School Board and presented with a beautiful set of gold medals. However, the efforts of the girls had not yet attracted any great amount of public attention, as witness the fact that the total attendance at an exhibition game which they staged shortly after their return in the hope of paying off part of the deficit created by their trip amounted to less than 200, and the net receipts to

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---

slightly over \$20. Under the circumstances, the girls could hardly have been blamed had they decided to "chuck the game" and let their hard-earned honors go by default, but that was not the way with the Grads. Going back to the grind, they plugged away all winter long, again won the provincial title and qualified to defend the Dominion championship.

### EDMONTON'S FIRST BIG GAME

London was again successful in winning the eastern title, and smarting under their defeat the previous year, they hurried out a challenge to the Grads to defend the championship. Both teams were again playing under rules similar to those in use the year previous, and one would have thought that similar playing arrangements would have been the fairest method of deciding the championship. This arrangement was suggested by the Grads, but the Shamrocks refused to come west unless both games were played according to their own rules, and rather than have the proposed series fall through, the Grads waived the point and told the easterners to come ahead. It was no easy task for the Grads to switch suddenly from their own style of play and adopt that of the visitors, but the girls went at the job determined to win if at all possible. What they did is a matter of history. The Londoners were turned back by scores of 17-6, and 32-20, and once again the Dominion title rested safely in Edmonton.

### INTERNATIONAL HONORS

Having demonstrated in their games with London that they possessed a team of unusual ability, the Grads decided to go after the highest honors on the continent, and sent a wire to the Cleveland "Favorite-Knits," claimants to the world's championship. The Cleveland team had defeated the London girls a short time previously by scores considerably greater than those by which the Grads defeated them, and the chances of defeating such a highly-trained and efficient team as the Americans were none too bright—in fact very few of the fans gave the Grads more than an outside chance of holding the Cleveland girls to even a reasonable score. The visitors probably held the same view, for they afterward stated that they had held but two or three practices in preparation for the series. At any rate, something like 5,000 spectators, who packed the arena when the games were played, got the thrill of their lives when the Grads not only held the Knits well in hand, but actually stepped out and played them off their feet. The visitors were thunderstruck when the Grads finished on the long end of the score in the first game, and they entered upon the final tilt determined to regain their prestige and return to Cleveland with their list of victories intact. Unfortunately for them, the Grads also had a nice little list of victories to their credit and were equally determined to add another win for good measure. The resulting game was an epic in the history of basketball, and when the Grads walked off the floor

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---



### THE CANADIAN CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY

This beautiful trophy came into the possession of the Grads following their defeat of the London Shamrocks, in 1922. It was donated by the Atlas Lumber Company several years ago to the Thistle Curling club, but after the rink was burned the trophy was no longer competed for. At the request of the Grads, it was given to the club for competition in ladies' basketball. The design and engraving were both completely changed, and the trophy in its present condition is not only unique in character, but probably the most expensive piece of silverware connected with ladies' athletics in Canada.

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---

at the end of the contest, they demonstrated to the world that they were, temporarily at least, absolutely unbeatable.

### THE AFTERMATH

The fame of the Grads spread far and wide following their defeat of the Favorite-Knits. Three challenges followed in quick succession, these coming from the Toronto "Maple Leafs," the Chicago "Brownies," and the Warren "National Lamps." The games with the first and last mentioned teams were somewhat one-sided, but the Brownies gave the Grads the greatest battles of their career, the series ending with the local girls eight points to the good. During the winter, the Grads again won the provincial title, and earned the right to defend the Canadian championship against the Toronto team which had won out in the east. The Toronto girls put up a much better battle than during their first trip west, but once more had to bow to the champions. Following the series with Toronto, two international contests were staged—the first with the Chicago "Lakeviews," and the second with the "Favorite-Knits," former title-holders. Both series were productive of splendid basketball, but the Grads were not seriously extended in any of the games, winning by fairly wide margins in each case.

As a matter of record, it will be interesting to reproduce the scores in the 18 games—Dominion and International—since the Grads won the championship in 1922:

Commercial Grads	won from	London Shamrocks, 17-6, 34-22.
"	"	Cleveland Knits, 34-20, 19-13.
"	"	Toronto Leafs, 41-11, 26-13.
"	"	Chicago Brownies, 20-17, 25-20.
"	"	Warren Lamps, 35-8, 27-13.
"	"	Toronto Leafs, 26-6, 23-14.
"	"	Chicago Lakeviews, 44-11, 42-10.
"	"	Cleveland Knits, 22-7, 40-19.
"	"	Warren Elks, 33-11, 33-20.

Total points: Grads, 541; Opponents, 241.

### THE TRIP TO EUROPE

Although the Cleveland girls had claimed the "world's championship," the Grads felt that to assume such a coveted honor would be out of place without first disposing of the championship team of Europe. Accordingly, they set their hearts upon the unheard-of task of financing a ten-thousand-mile trip in quest of the world-wide honors. It was known that basketball had been introduced into Europe by the American soldiers during the war, and from reports received in Canada it appeared that the game was catching on very rapidly and that several good teams were to be found across the water. In order to make the trip worth while from an athletic point of view, the Grads endeav-

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---

ored to have basketball accepted as a competitive sport by the Olympic board. This they were unable to do, but the president of the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale, in Paris, promised to arrange exhibition games, as well as a championship game with Strasbourg, which team held the European title. This arrangement was perfectly satisfactory to the Grads.

The sanction of the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union was unanimously granted, the only stipulation being that the Grads must finance their own trip. This stupendous undertaking was made possible by the generous support of Edmonton citizens who backed the team to the limit. Every game was attended by from 3,000 to 5,000 spectators, so that, in addition to meeting the huge guarantees of teams brought from distant points, and expenses incidental to promoting games on a big scale, the Grads were able to raise sufficient funds to defray their expenses to Europe—a matter of well over \$11,000.

Eight players comprised the overseas team, together with the chaperone and coach. Sailing from Montreal on the steamer *Montroyal*, June 27, the little party reached Liverpool a week later, and after spending a day in London, went direct to Paris. The team was met by the president of the French governing body, and presented with a schedule of the games which had been arranged.

### IN EUROPE

On account of more or less friction between the men's and women's sporting organizations in France, it was not possible to play in the stadium at Colombes, as the Grads had hoped; nevertheless, the team attended the Olympic sports nearly every afternoon, and the girls are not likely to forget the wonderful athletic prowess which was demonstrated by such remarkable athletes as Nurmi, Rittola, Liddell, Lowe, Abrahams, Paddock and Osborne, not forgetting our own Coaffee who, while not a point winner, ran remarkably well.

The Grads' first important game in France was held in the immense Pershing Stadium in conjunction with the national sports for women. As the championship Strasbourg team had a number of competitors in individual events, they decided not to enter their basketball team, so that the Grads met the Paris team which had won the championship of the Paris league. In preparation for this game, the French authorities very kindly arranged a practice game with an all-star team so that the Grads might become used to the rules and the style of play. Another game was also arranged with one of the teams belonging to the Paris league. Each of these games was won quite easily by the Grads, but the French girls proved to be fine sports and took the result in the best of good humor. Each member of the Grads was presented with a championship medal following the contest at the stadium.

### ON TO STRASBOURG

The team went direct from Paris to Strasbourg, two or three days prior to their game at the latter city. Once again the continental girls were thorough sports, and gave the Grads two practice games before the championship event was staged. The latter game was played under the patronage of the British Consul. The Strasbourg girls were much bigger than those in Paris, and gave a very good account of themselves, although the score was somewhat one-sided. The victory over the Strasbourg team gave the Grads the European championship, and, at the annual meeting of the congress of the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale in Paris, the team was awarded the official world's title—the first ever granted to any basketball team. This honor is to be held until the next games in 1926, at Brussels, when a three-cornered tournament will be held among teams from Europe, United States and Canada.

Leaving Strasbourg, the team went to Mainz, and down the Rhine to Coblenz. This is recognized as one of the finest trips in the world, and was thoroughly enjoyed by each member of the party. From Coblenz, the team went to Luxembourg, and then to Brussels. From Brussels to



ELEANOR MOUNTFIELD  
Captain, 1923



## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

---

Lille, from Lille to Roubaix, and then to Dunkirk, was the itinerary mapped out for the party. The war area adjacent to Lille, including excursions to Vimy and Ypres, added to the interest of the trip. It was intended that the team should play at Dunkirk, but something went wrong with the arrangements, and two games were played at Roubaix instead. The Roubaix team was runner-up to Strasbourg in the European championships, and although both games between their girls and the Grads were won by the latter quite easily, the Roubaix girls caught on to the Canadian style of playing very quickly, and should prove to be real contenders for continental honors at no distant date.

### BACK TO THE BRITISH ISLES

From Dunkirk the team went back to London and stayed for several days. A game had been promised in London, but for some reason which the Grads have never been able to learn, the team did not get the opportunity to meet any of the girls in that city. The Grads even offered to stage an exhibition among themselves, but this suggestion did not meet with approval, and the team left London without any opportunity presenting itself of meeting the London team which had participated in the European tournament just a year previous. From London the Grads journeyed north to Edinburgh, through the Trossachs to Glasgow, across both Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond, and then down through the English lake district. The beauty of the districts through which the team passed must be seen to be appreciated. Except for a single day, the weather was perfect, which added materially to the enjoyment of the entire trip.

### ON THE WAY HOME

The Grads sailed from Liverpool on Aug. 15, on the steamer Montcalm. The passage both to and from England was said to be an average one, so far as the weather was concerned, but it is safe to say that if the team ever makes the trip again, certain members of the party would prefer something smoother in the way of a "swell" time. The trip back was made much more pleasant by reason of the "newsies" also being on board. Landing at Quebec, the team proceeded by rail to Montreal, where their captain deserted the party and became attached for life to Dr. Bob Tait. Winnie pulled off a big surprise on the other members of the team by having the ceremony performed before the main body arrived; however, the temporary disappointment was forgotten very quickly when the summons came to the wedding dinner. Following the dinner, the team—minus the former captain—left for New York, where they spent a glorious week-end. From New York they returned to Montreal, and then entrained for Toronto, where a wonderful reception awaited them. From Toronto the team went to

## HISTORY OF THE "GRADS"

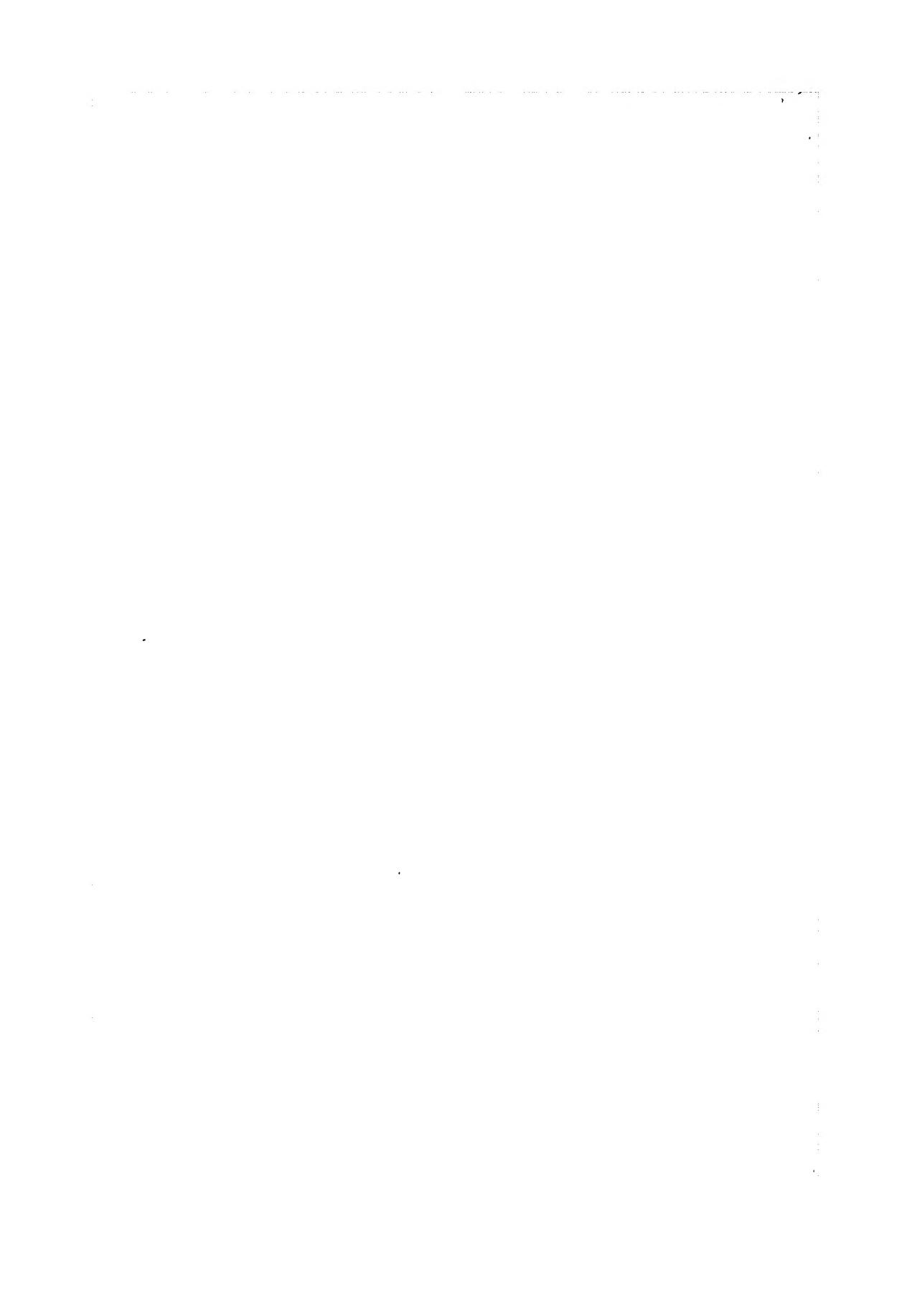
Chicago, and here, too, the American teams which have visited Edmonton, were out in force to greet the homecomers. Leaving Chicago, everything went along smoothly until the train arrived at Unity, Saskatchewan, where, through an accident to a freight train ahead, the Grads were stalled for something like 14 hours. This delay prevented the team from arriving in time for the reception which had been arranged in Edmonton; however, new plans were drawn up hurriedly, and the reception which was tendered the girls when they finally arrived will probably go down in the history of Edmonton as the biggest thing of its kind ever staged.

## THE FUTURE

It has been said that no one knows what the future may bring forth. Perhaps we had better let it go at that. At any rate, it may be safe to say that so long as the present team remains intact their continued success seems assured. Furthermore, the thousands who have seen them play are thoroughly convinced that when the time does come for them to step out of the picture, they will go out like true sportsmen--fighting hard, but always fighting fairly.

### *Summary of the Grads Games in Europe*

Commercial Grads, 63.	Paris All-Stars, 14.
" " 65.	French League, 13.
" " 69.	Paris Champions, 7.
" " 37.	Strasbourg, 8.
" " 65.	Roubaix, 4.
" " 61.	Roubaix All-Stars, 1.
Total points: Grads, 360. Opponents, 47.	





## *An Appreciation*

To those girls who served "in the ranks" and passed on before the attainment of our greatest ambition; to those loyal ex-students and friends of Commercial High who stuck with us through the long grind from 1914 to 1922, and through whose generosity we were able to go East in quest of the first Dominion championship; to the service clubs of Edmonton who have assisted us so willingly in the entertainment of visiting teams; to the thousands of supporters whose patronage made possible the world's highest honors in basketball; to those who live in distant places but whose letters have been a constant source of inspiration in our contests—to all of you, and to any others who have in any way contributed to our success, we extend our sincerest thanks.

THE COMMERCIAL GRADS